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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this handbook are to assist teachers in examining a number of concerns regarding the expression of sexism in language and literature and to provide some suggestions for coping with these problems in the classroom. The first section, devoted to language, considers stereotyping and role expectations, as well as the following areas of concern: generic terms, occupational terms, cliches and literary stereotypes, sexist "put-downs," adjectives, pronouns, gender of inanimate objects and characters in children's literature, overcompensation, and correspondence forms. The second section, on literature, deals with the study of literary roles, questions for discussion, and authors and books. Sexism and sex-role stereotyping in the mass media, specifically in films, television, newspapers, magazines, and advertising, are considered in the third section. Several bibliographies dealing with sexism and sex roles are cited. (LL)

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ROLE: YOUR OWN

A Handbook for Coping With Sexism in the Study of Language, Literature, and the Mass Media

ROLE: WIFE

ROLE: HUSBAND

ROLE: DOCTOR

ROLE: NURSE

ROLE: T V REPAIRER

ROLE: LAWYER

ROLE: EXECUTIVE

ROLE: PARENT

ROLE: SCIENTIST

ROLE: COOK

ROLE: PILOT

ROLE: TYPIST

ROLE: SENATOR

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Los Angeles
City Schools
1976

ROLE: YOUR OWN

A Handbook for Coping with Sexism

in the Study of

Language, Literature, and the Mass Media

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FOREWORD

A growing concern for equal treatment of the sexes has produced some modifications in federal, state, and local laws; in job opportunities; and even in life styles. To eradicate sex-role stereotyping in education, schools will need to make changes in instructional materials, course offerings, and programming practices. Efforts to implement recommendations for such changes are evident in the revision of evaluation procedures for selection of State instructional materials, in the guidelines for authors issued by publishing houses (e.g., Holt, Rinehart, and Winston; McGraw-Hill; Scott, Foresman), and in the actions taken by local school boards. Positive steps taken by the Los Angeles City Board of Education are outlined in Dealing with Sex Discrimination in Education (Instructional Planning Division: Publication No. GC-33, 1975).

Achieving significant change in attitudes, behavior, and social customs is a slow and sometimes indirect process. Teachers in general have an important role in helping students to develop value systems and modes of thought, but English teachers in particular have a major responsibility. They must assist students in understanding how language shapes thought and action, in using language with clarity and precision, and in gaining a greater appreciation of the beauty and richness of language as a major vehicle for the expression of ideas and emotions. On a more basic level, the teaching of language usage and the analysis of literary selections and of mass media can reinforce sex-role stereotypes unless the teacher is conscious of—and can make students conscious of—word forms and role models that influence the way in which members of both sexes perceive themselves and others.

This handbook identifies some of the critical areas for developing an awareness of sexism in language and literature. It also offers sugges-

tions for coping with examples of sex bias encountered in English studies. Some informed English teachers will prefer to teach language as it is, making sure that students understand the possible interpretations placed on certain traditional usages as well as the possible effects that certain stereotypes in literature and mass media have had on their thinking. Others will wish to teach language as a dynamic process, encouraging students to explore reasonable and acceptable alternatives for some ambiguous usages and to apply additional criteria to their reading and the mass media. But personal awareness and scholarly discussion must precede action.

The study of English assumes new dimensions when teachers and students begin to explore the areas of concern outlined in this handbook. Sex stereotypes, role expectations, and sex-biased usages are in part molded and maintained by the language and literature that a society honors. Having helped to widen personal potential and individual aspiration, English teachers may more honestly say to each student, "You're free now to choose—role: your own!"

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English Department
Chatsworth High School

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NANCY WELLS
English Department Chairperson
San Pedro High School

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CONTENTS

Foreword iii
Acknowledgments v
To the Teacher 1
  Purpose 1
  Definition of Sexism 2
  Treatment of Students 3

Language 5
  Stereotyping and Role Expectations 7
  Areas of Concern 8
    Area I - Generic Terms 9
    Area II - Occupational Terms 9
    Area III - Cliches and Literary Stereotypes 10
    Area IV - Sexist "Put-Downs" 11
    Area V - Adjectives 12
    Area VI - Pronouns 13
    Area VII - Gender of Inanimate Objects and Characters in Children's Literature 16
    Area VIII- Overcompensation 16
    Area IX - Letter Forms 17

Literature 18
  Study of Literary Roles 19
  Questions for Discussion 22
  Authors and Books 24

Mass Media 26
  Films 26
  Television and Radio 27
  Newspapers and Magazines 29
  Advertising 32

List of Works Cited 34
Bibliographies 36

TO THE TEACHER

PURPOSE

The purpose of this handbook is to assist teachers in examining a number of concerns regarding the expression of sexism in language and literature and to provide some suggestions for coping with these problems in the classroom. This publication is not intended to be a course of study or a definitive treatment of all aspects of sexism in language and literature. However, the bibliography and suggestions do offer some resources for teachers who wish to develop curriculum materials, units, or study guides.

Today, teachers and administrators, television and film producers, magazine publishers and newspaper editors, authors and advertising executives, and many other persons involved with education, in both the general and specific sense, are concerned with sexism. One impetus to this concern is the necessity to comply with state (Chapter 5, Division 1, California Education Code) and federal laws (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972) regarding equal treatment of the sexes. Other reasons deal in various ways with treating people as individuals in order to help them fulfill their potentials, to better society, and to improve the quality of life. English teachers, as educators and as persons concerned with the humanities and humane values, have special need to become aware of sexism and racism and to do whatever they can to promote reasonable change through fair and equal treatment of persons in the study of language and literature.

English teachers can begin this process by extending their goals to:

1. Guide students to select language carefully and purposefully to express accurately and fairly ideas and concepts in non-sexist terms.

2. Perceive and help students to perceive

members of both sexes as realizing human potential when they demonstrate such qualities as responsibility, objectivity, gentleness, and courage.

3. Teach and elicit critical thinking and an awareness of the ways sexist language and literature can affect thoughts, influence attitudes, direct behavior, and interpret reality.

4. Recognize the effect that society and the language it accepts have on roles of persons and the way that stereotyping distorts individual potential.

5. Assure, in the selection of textbooks and other instructional materials as well as in the daily conduct of class discussions, a fair portrayal of the diversity of roles open to males and females, the changing attitudes in regard to these roles, and the contributions of males and females to society.

6. Become more fully aware of any sexual and cultural bias within themselves as they also help students to grow in sensitivity.

DEFINITION OF SEXISM

The word sexism itself was coined by an analogy to racism. Originally, sexism meant bias against the female sex. It has come to mean any arbitrary stereotyping of persons, male or female, on the basis of their sex. Educators must recognize bias, examine its causes, and work toward elimination of both.

English teachers are in a unique position to effect positive change as they deal with language in all its facets—the personal remark, the informal discussion, the speech, the grammar exercise, the journal, the letter, the essay, the short story, the novel, the drama, the poem, the newspaper article, the film. They can guide students to critical awareness of how language works. They can help students

to free the language from bias and ambiguity without sacrificing beauty, strength, or common sense.

English teachers, in particular, should be sensitive to the ridiculous and senseless nature of nonproductive responses, thoughtless exercises, and extreme positions. Recent publishers' guidelines, resolutions by the National Council of Teachers of English and the California Association of Teachers of English, and statements by responsible representatives of change do not call for such radical actions as:

1. Rewriting Shakespeare's plays or the Bible.
2. Discarding all literature that is sexist in nature.
3. Changing all generic words, such as human to huperson.

All languages reveal sexist attributes. English has an advantage among modern languages in that it has fewer gender requirements and a supreme richness of vocabulary that allows flexibility and choice.

TREATMENT OF STUDENTS

Most English teachers see themselves as humanists and humanitarians who treat students as individuals worthy of respect and attempt to help them to perceive others in this way, both in literature and in life.

In conducting usual classroom activities, teachers should be equally concerned not to segregate or differentiate between students on the basis of sex. They must be alert to avoid labeling, grouping, or addressing students in such a manner as to reinforce sex stereotypes and role expectations. For example, saying "boys and girls" is separating and segregating while saying "students" or "people" is non-discriminatory and inclusive. Assigning groups to any activity should be on a non-sexist basis to encourage a wide range of responses and a sense of community.

Teachers will want to avoid sex stereotyping in expected behavior from students (girls will be more polite, boys more loud). Students of either sex who are willing to do so may carry books to the bookroom, not merely those who are "strong boys." All tasks can be assigned fairly and rotated so that every student has many experiences in managing classroom tasks.

In selecting materials for bulletin boards, chalkboard exercises, vocabulary and spelling assignments, and other activities, teachers may want to experiment with statements that indicate reversals of "expected" roles as well as non-sexist formats: "The pilot flew more than her allotted number of hours last month" (reversal of stereotype) or "The pilots flew more than their allotted number of hours" (non-sexist, plural).

LANGUAGE

Language as an instrument of thought and expression has a major role in perpetuating both racism and sexism. It is unnecessary to use, consciously or unconsciously, sexist terms and images when English offers to the sensitive and thinking person such a wealth of alternatives.

These are some ways in which sexist stereotyping manifests itself in language:

1. People may assume that a person's sex determines the appropriate speech for that person either to hear or to use. This patterning may apply to pitch, stress, intonation, and loudness as well. Thus, women, girls, housewives, or secretaries (who are stereotyped as female) are expected to use only certain locutions and to avoid others. On the other hand, men, boys, business managers, and construction workers (who are stereotyped as male) are allowed to use certain words and language patterns and not expected to use others.

2. People may imply that things masculine are superior to things feminine. For example, there is a man-sized job as opposed to woman's work. Less often, things feminine are implied as superior, thus denigrating men: "It needs the woman's touch."

3. People may be confused by the use of masculine generic terms since they assume that, in nearly all cases, the gender matches the sex of the referent. Does chairman or fireman or principal have a literal meaning to most listeners? If so, then women are subtly and temporarily excluded from consideration for such assignments. The frequent use of man in both the literal and generic sense excludes women in language and therefore in thought, self-concept, acceptance, and involvement. This problem is compounded by hundreds of

generic terms using masculine markers, such as brotherhood, fellowship, manpower, or forefathers, and by the standard formal English use of he, him, his as the singular common pronoun.

Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, both noted linguists, suggest that thoughts are limited by the vocabulary and syntactical patterns of the language. Further, people cannot verbalize new concepts unless they have words to express them. Language can handicap both sexes. Just as women may be excluded from many positions in society as a result of this kind of verbal and, hence, behavioral patterning, so men are also expected to behave in certain ways, sometimes to their denigration or over-extension. The enemy is he, as is the criminal, bastard, coward, Peeping Tom, thief. Although no man can be always aggressive, strong, fearless, or controlled, as the stereotype legend implies, he must never cry, feel weak, or "have a poor spell!" The discrimination works both ways.

Whether one wishes it or not, language does change. More and more people are choosing language that reflects the changing relationship between women and men and between women and society. Among examples of these modifications are:

Reference book titles like American Men . . are being changed to American Men and Women.

Educators are rewriting textbooks to eliminate sexist language and stereotyping.

The United States' Census Bureau has changed more than fifty job titles to conform to non-sexist language.

The United States Government Printing Office includes Ms. in its stylebook list of acceptable titles.

The Washington Post has ordered its editor-

ial staff to eliminate words like divorcee, grandmother, blonde, or housewife in all stories where, if a man were involved, divorce, grandfather, blond, or householder would not be appropriate (Key, 1975, p. 140). Other newspapers, such as the Los Angeles Times, are using the last name only for subsequent references to females, the same usage as for males: "Mrs. Arline Wagner stated . . . Wagner said . . ." Many newspapers no longer list male and female jobs separately (National Advertising Review Board, 1975, p. 3).

STEREOTYPING AND ROLE EXPECTATIONS

What are sex stereotypes and role expectations? They are mental sets that place women or men in certain occupations and attribute certain traits to these persons. An extreme example might be a lady doctor, who is not expected to engage in a man's profession and who must then be gruff and unfeeling, or a male secretary, who is performing a woman's task and must be meek and meticulous. Men and women should be treated as persons, not primarily as members of the opposite sex. Neither men nor women should be assigned certain characteristics of behavior on the basis of sex or relegated to certain job classifications or to a primary or secondary role in society.

This is an example of an awareness exercise to review sex stereotyping:

The following is a list of occupations. Without thinking and as rapidly as possible, write M for male or F for female opposite each job.

1. nurse
2. telephone operator
3. television announcer
4. disc jockey
5. elementary school teacher
6. coach
7. judge
8. construction worker
9. baby sitter
10. plumber
11. artist
12. designer
13. minister
14. pilot
15. jockey

In writing, thinking, and discussing, students should recognize that roles are changing. Many women are doctors, lawyers, judges, business managers, construction workers; some are bank presidents and members of Congress and other elected bodies. Many men are social workers, cooks, nurses, housecleaners, and switchboard operators; some are househusbands and single parents.

Many language and grammar textbooks offer a wealth of examples of sex stereotyping and role expectation. Some of these are subtle while others are blatant. A good classroom exercise would be to ask students to analyze texts for such examples and to rephrase them to avoid sexism as well as to accomplish the purpose for which the exercise was originally intended. In another exercise, students could examine illustrations for sex stereotyping. Such exercises may provide a new use for old books!

Here are a few paraphrased sentences from exercises in grammar books. How do they reflect role expectations?

1. While she was gossiping, the soup boiled over.
2. She talks modestly and softly.
3. Yes, Janet, you should file your fingernails.
4. He is a man who enjoys good conversation and dislikes silly women.
5. Gentlemen prefer blondes because they are drawn to women with fair hair.
6. He is a real man who enjoys baseball and football.

AREAS OF CONCERN

English teachers have long assumed responsibility for helping students deal with semantic problems. To eliminate sexism in language, teachers must be prepared to discuss with their classes certain common words and traditional usages that imply and, in the thinking of some people, perpetuate sex bias. The following paragraphs present some areas of linguistic

concern with which teachers should be familiar. Serious consideration of these concerns will help teachers and students to make conscious and informed language choices in speech and writing.

Area I - Generic Terms

Some generic terms make use of man and other words of masculine gender, alone or in compound words, when the intended meaning is humanity in general. Even though these terms are traditional, they have become offensive to many people since they imply exclusion of the female. Psychologists and sociologists state that exclusion leads to lower role expectation and limitation of human potential. Insistence on masculine terms as generic can lead to absurdities like "the development of the uterus in rats, guinea pigs and men" (Key, 1975, p. 89). Suitable, euphonious, non-sexist words can be substituted for masculine generic terms.

Example	Alternative
man	human being, human, person, man and woman
mankind	humanity, human beings, people
forefathers	ancestors
manpower	workers, work force, human power
to man (v.)	to staff (v.)

Area II - Occupational Terms

Job designations ending with -man also exclude women from the language and possibly from consideration for jobs despite the law. At best, they may indicate that a woman is doing a man's job and is therefore stepping out of place. Women are now working in many jobs once classified as exclusively male, such as police work, fire fighting, construction, and postal service.

Example	Alternative
congressman	representative, member of Congress (or Congresswoman

	Burke, Congressman Goldwater)
businessman	business manager, business executive, supervisor or shop owner, insurance agent
fireman	fire fighter
policeman	police officer
chairman	chairperson, chair (chaired the meeting)

(Note that the suffix -person need not be the only alternative.)

The deletion of feminine suffixes and masculine or feminine adjective qualifiers is also a sensible and simple process, again to avoid stereotyping and subtle denigration.

The feminine suffixes (the same as the diminutive, in some cases) are also considered demeaning.

Example	Alternative
authoress, poetess	author, poet
stewardess	flight attendant
suffragette	suffragist
lady doctor	doctor
lady plumber	plumber
male secretary	secretary
male nurse	nurse

A person may refer to self as "lady plumber" or "male secretary," "poetess," but these terms should not be used to identify general job categories.

Area III - Cliches and Literary Stereotypes

Some terms are part of the traditional language patterns and literary heritage of society. Many of these terms are demeaning to women (and sometimes to men), keeping them subtly in a subservient position. Perhaps these terms should be treated like tired metaphors—as interesting and occasionally humorous, but wisely omitted in most writing and speaking.

Example	Alternative
the fairer sex, the weaker sex	women, the female sex
the distaff side	women, the female side
the old man	husband, spouse, mate, father
the little woman	wife, spouse, mate
old maid, spinster	single woman
Adam's Rib	woman
sweet young thing	young woman, girl

The submissive wife, the domineering woman, the madonna, the henpecked husband, the intrepid warrior, the mama s boy, the ladies' man are a few examples of literary stereotypes which should not be perpetuated. At least such terms should not be used unthinkingly. They may, of course, be used to illustrate stereotyping in a particular story or program.

Area IV - Sexist "Put-Downs"

Somewhat similar to the cliches and literary terms that have been cited are the language "put-downs" which place people, usually women but sometimes men, in a subservient role or treat them without dignity. These "put-downs" should be avoided because they are offensive to many persons, even though other individuals may not yet be aware of their implications.

Example	Alternative
lady barber	barber
male housekeeper	housekeeper
girl (worker)	secretary, assistant, helper
boy (worker) (seldom used any more)	assistant, apprentice
girls, gals, ladies (adult females)	women
co-ed	student

dish, cookie, tomato, peach, honey, sugar	woman
baby, babe, doll, dame, broad	woman
chick, filly, fox, kitten	woman
dude, stud, jock	man
wolf, buck, fox	man

Many people have been taught to use lady as a term of politeness, respect, or even class distinction. The term may seem flattering, but it is often used subtly to exclude women from participation in occupations, social activities, emotional responses, and other behaviors not appropriate to ladies (Lakoff, 1973, pp. 49-62). Since the original meaning of lady was breadkneader, the term might well be relegated to the category of archaism in many of its current uses.

Area V - Adjectives

Stereotyped adjectives like cliches perpetuate unfortunate and demeaning images of both men and women or, at best, limit the way in which people perceive the roles of men and women. In fact, most stereotypical adjectives are pejorative to women and neutral or laudatory to men. For instance, an angry person may be either male or female; the translation to the hysterical female or outraged male stereotypes both, but to the detriment of the woman. A forceful head of the family may be of either sex; yet, when terms are selected to describe females (domineering mother) and males (stern father), the intended meaning of forcefulness is often translated differently. Moreover, a bold man is considered to be courageous, but a bold woman is regarded as unduly aggressive. Students may wish to experiment with reversing these uses or discovering other examples. (Sources for exploring the latter are items by social and film columnists.) A good exercise would be to write a paragraph using the stereotypical adjectives and then to re-write the

paragraph treating the person in a more individual and less conforming role.

These are some examples of adjectives that are used exclusively or usually in referring to members of one sex or the other:

"Feminine" Adjectives	"Masculine" Adjectives
ladylike	virile
petite	tough
flighty	aggressive
winsome	sensible
perky	adventurous
buxom	athletic
silly	independent
nosy	dominant
passive	rational
delightful	manly
tender	handsome
scatterbrained	absentminded

Another exercise would require that a student analyze a short story from the nineteenth century and one from the twentieth century to report on what differences have evolved in the use of such adjectives.

Area VI - Pronouns

At present, standard written English (formal) is still tied to the masculine third person singular for generic reference. Prescriptive grammarians of the past and present have dictated that indefinite pronouns are singular and that the pronoun agreement is always masculine unless everyone referred to is female. Many contemporary grammarians agree that patterns change as the rationale for change becomes clear.

Every English teacher recognizes how difficult it is to persuade students to apply this agreement. The usage keeps slipping, as though the students themselves recognize in some subconscious logic that the terms are exclusionary, sometimes illogical, and often even ridiculous.

Women are conspicuously omitted in supposed generic statements using the masculine singular pronoun, such as:

"The candidate will file his statement."
"The taxpayer will protest his tax increase."
"The professor will meet his class."

These types of statements imply that women are not rightfully or usually candidates for office, taxpayers, scholars, students, voters, or persons in many other roles. Students seem quite logical when they insist, in spite of instruction to the contrary, on saying and writing, "Everyone must have their tickets ready at the gate."

Logic and authority indicate that the plural is a natural usage with pronouns that are plural in concept. Spoken English has preempted this usage almost entirely among even the best educated and most prescriptive speakers. The following authorities "accept" this usage:

American English Grammar. Charles C. Fries. New York: Appleton-Century, 1940.

Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage. Bergen and Cornelia Evans. New York: Random House, 1957.

Current American Usage. Margaret M. Bryant, ed. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1962.

American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. William Morris, ed. New York: American Heritage, 1970.

Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Writer's Guide and Index to English. 5th Edition. Porter G. Perrin. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1972.

Precedents are often cited from usages of Samuel Johnson and Shakespeare: "Everyone Sacrifices a Cow or more, according to their different Degrees of Wealth or Devotion" and "God send everyone their harts desire" (Key, 1975, p. 88). Nearly all public speakers, from presidents to principals, make such statements as "Everyone has their own opinion about the matter." Nevertheless, many English teachers, having learned so well to say "Everyone has his own opinion," cannot accept the plural usage. Furthermore, most standardized tests still include such items, requiring students to choose the traditionally "correct" form. These are some alternatives:

1. Rewording to eliminate unnecessary gender pronouns:
   The average American drinks his coffee black.
   The average American drinks black coffee.

2. Utilizing the plural exclusively:
   Most Americans drink their coffee black.

3. Alternating male and female usages in a passage:
   The average American drinks his coffee black.
   The average American puts sugar on her cereal.

4. Reverting to a former usage of it as the referent for indefinite pronouns:
   "A person is a thinking, intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself..." Samuel Johnson.

   Current usage retains it in certain idioms, such as:

   "Who is it?"
   "It is Jane."
   "I believe it was James."
   The average American drinks its coffee

black. (This usage is not likely to be preferred.)

5. Inventing a new pronoun to serve as the third person singular indefinite:

   Thon for that one was attempted at the end of the nineteenth century and abandoned. Others have been suggested, but the introduction of new pronouns does not seem likely to "catch on." It seems much more likely that one of the other alternatives will be adopted (Schulz, 1975, p. 165).

Area VII - Gender of Inanimate Objects and Characters in Children's Literature

Formerly, grammar texts prescribed at some length the customary use of she in referring to such nouns as ships, cars, or countries. The newer language-grammar texts omit such usages or mention only that the feminine referent is used to show "intimacy" or "affection" (Vander Beek, 1974, p. 419). For example:

She's the fastest car around, and she's the safest.

Another area for investigation is children's literature. Several studies have revealed that he appears three times as often as she in children's books and that most animal characters are identified as he (Nilsen, 1971, p. 923; O'Donnell, 1973, p. 1068). If students write fables or children's stories or do exercises in personification, they might be asked to check each other's work for masculine/feminine stereotypes. Here again, class members may experiment with reversing the roles of their characters or with trying to create non-sexist characterizations. They will certainly want to achieve a balance of male and female roles.

Area VIII - Overcompensation

Well-intentioned persons who have no desire to parody or undermine meaningful change may still get bogged down in wordiness or ridiculous substitutions. Use of common sense will facilitate change and help to preserve the sanity of the class.

Example	Alternative
Everyone is asked to be sure that he or she makes his or her decision by himself or herself.	All should make their own decisions.

In writing, the form s/he is gaining acceptance and can help students to avoid over use of she and he.

Area IX - Letter Forms

Letter forms, too, are changing, especially the phrasing in formal business letters. However, many style books and language-grammar texts still suggest that Gentlemen or Dear Sir is the proper salutation. Change agents are dropping the salutation or using more inclusive terms, such as Dear Sir or Madam, Dear People, Dear Persons, Dear Editor, or Dear Manager, when the name of the recipient is not known. Women would be rich indeed if they had a penny for every letter received beginning "Dear Sir." Students might survey practices in "junk" mail advertising and experiment with more appropriate salutations in letters of complaint, request, and inquiry when the sex of the recipient is unknown.

LITERATURE

Literature as taught in secondary schools is more than a tool for improving reading and writing and dispensing information to students. Literature also illustrates values, illuminates reality, and reflects society, past and present. Many studies undertaken by library associations, educational groups, and feminist organizations present strong evidence that reading does change attitudes and develop self images. "Both adults and children read what they are and are what they read" (Zimet, 1973, p. 2). There is mounting evidence that females are portrayed unrealistically and sparsely in many secondary school literature collections.

An enlightened approach to use of literature in the English classroom can make students and teachers more fully aware of how sex roles limit human potential. The self image is important. It determines how a person feels about physical appearance, other people, and personal worth. When references to women are omitted from literary selections or when women are portrayed as inferior, less capable, or less important human beings, all readers are subtly affected (Froschl, 1975, p. 40). What is the effect on readers when the titles of texts, names of units, and editorial comments involve use of man and his environment, the nature of man, and the language of man?

One problem in resolving sexism-stereotyping in literature and in life is the confusion of the traditional male/female attributes with male/female human beings, so that persons are forced into roles and behaviors that are rigid, narrow, and limiting.

In traditional thinking, the masculine attributes are the strong, dominant ones: aggression, change, objectivity, logic, intellect, analysis, confidence, and ego. The feminine attributes are the passive, submissive ones: subjectivity, intuition, spontaneity, contemplation, altruism,

mysticism, and selflessness. Psychologists note that no man or woman embodies solely these male or female attributes. Individual human beings have both in differing measures. Yet literature, as a reflection of traditional thinking, has often preserved the exclusiveness of these attributes through its character portrayals. The whole person acknowledges both the passive and assertive aspects of his or her personality and accepts the wholeness of others, valuing those positive traits which improve the quality of individual life. Out of the feminine attributes have evolved two traditional roles for female characters, the passive-good and the active-evil. The former are exemplified by Penelope, Desdemona, and Lucie Manette; the latter by Circe, Regan, and Madame Defarge.

Men have also been victimized in this distorted view of human potential. In becoming stereotyped in literature and in life as the master, the achiever, the warrior, or the brute, men have been frequently denied expression of such human emotion as fear, frustration, and tenderness. However, the range of male characters based on traditional attributes is far wider (Odysseus, Othello, Sidney Carton) than that of female characters.

STUDY OF LITERARY ROLES

Teachers may wish to encourage students to examine these assertions by asking groups or individuals to do research projects ranging from such simple tasks as suggesting stereotyped literary figures to analyzing characters from mythology and other literature. Students might list dominant traits and determine whether the characters that they represent are stereotyped according to male/female attributes. An investigation of nineteenth and early twentieth-century works will offer an especially rich selection of stereotypes. Students might also analyze comic strips and television programs for current examples.

Literary allusions provide another source of study. What are the etymologies of these words?

What are their modern connotations?

Amazon	Pollyana	Oedipus
Cassandra	Spartan	Sisyphus
Penelope	Hercules	

The applications today are stereotypical. Are they also pejorative?

Other projects might include encouraging class members (a) to choose one (or more) from the following list of literary stereotypes or archetypes and write an explanation of each of them; and (b) to find a short story, poem, or play that exemplifies the stereotype.

Female

The Matriarch	The Shrew
The Old Maid	The Submissive Wife
The Temptress	The Shrinking Violet
The Troublemaker	The Martyr

Male

The Noble Savage	The Patriarch
Don Juan	The Henpecked Husband
The Sensitive Youth	
The Dreamer	The Superman

Many authors, of course, have refused to depict a stylized and distorted view of human beings, regardless of sex. Literature offers a wealth of material about women who demonstrate strength and courage as well as compassion and men who demonstrate sensitivity and compassion as well as strength, characters who do not conform to stylized roles of femininity and masculinity.

In the past, far too few women wrote for publication because of social taboos against women authors until the late nineteenth century (Ihrig, 1974, p. 30). Robert Southey, poet laureate of England, wrote to Emily Bronte in 1837: "Literature cannot be the business of a

woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure she will have for it, even as an accomplishment and recreation" (quoted in Mrs. Gaskell's Life of Charlotte Bronte). Today, women are gaining special recognition in a literary world that has long excluded or neglected them.

English teachers may help students to develop a greater recognition of the importance of both women and men authors. Teachers may wish to:

1. Explain the reasons for the lack of female authors in literary history.

2. Point out examples of female authors who have contributed to anthologies and have written books.

3. Introduce additional material by and about women and their contributions to literature and culture.

4. Select classroom materials that offer an equal proportion of male and female authors, in so far as possible.

5. Provide opportunities for students to analyze traditional and contemporary reading materials for sexist content, stereotypical characters, and sexist language.

6. Develop materials and exercises which help class members to increase their awareness and understanding of such problems and to value persons for themselves, not for fitting stereotyped roles.

7. Select other than traditional generic terms to discuss such literary considerations as conflict and theme: Man vs. Man, Man vs. Nature.

8. Discuss the ways that literature has helped to reflect and shape the feminine and

masculine roles in society.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Of course, teachers will not wish to reject works (or authors) of literary merit because they present sex-stereotyped characters or sexist ideas. But teachers may want to provide time for additional discussion and consideration of questions about these works, questions which are not at present included in most anthologies and study guides:

1. What determines masculinity/femininity in a character or a person?

2. What is considered acceptable behavior for males and females in the social setting of the work? Do these standards differ from those of the present or past centuries?

3. Are the characters, especially female ones, multi-dimensional or narrow? Are they positive or negative?

4. What sorts of problems do the characters face? Are these problems sex-stereotyped?

5. What resources do the characters have? Are these representative of human resources, or are they limited by sex-role expectations?

6. Do the characters have positive self-images? If not, what are the reasons? Is stereotyping involved in these reasons?

7. Do female characters have power? Is this power positive or negative? Do they use wiles or tricks? Why?

8. Do female characters demonstrate intellectual curiosity, interest in a wide range of things, ability to think logically, independence of decision? If not, why not?

9. Are female characters respected and responded to as equals by other characters? If not, why not?

10. If female roles are traditional, do they at least demonstrate strong attributes that give positive images of those roles?

11. What seems to be the intent of the author in these portrayals?

12. Is the author male or female? Is the narrator male or female? How does the point of view affect the telling of the story?

13. Are females (or males) omitted from the work? Is this omission necessary?

14. Has the author succeeded in creating convincing male and female characters? Do they give a positive picture to readers?

Other exercises and projects follow logically from responding to these questions. Students may rewrite scenes or parts of stories to remove stereotyping or reverse roles. These may be taped or read to the class. Students may also apply these questions to outside reading and write an evaluation or critique from the point of view of a publisher's assistant accepting or rejecting the work, of a feminist writing a review, or of a parent challenging the choice of book. Answers to the questions also provide material on which to base collages or montages of individual characters from a story or book. Students may draw cartoons or select popular songs to illustrate and/or satirize sex-role stereotyping of characters, or they may choose two songs to illustrate two sides of a character, one non-sexist and one sex-stereotyped.

The contents of textbooks are changing to meet the demands of state departments of education, enlightened local school authorities, and concerned public groups; but there is often long delay before materials with a new approach reach the classroom. Meanwhile, teachers will continue to use the texts and resources presently available; but they can apply their new insights to the analysis of any materials

and can make lessons more interesting, relevant, and realistic.

Some English Departments may wish to initiate a separate course in women's studies or women in literature or prepare a special unit for regular courses to help offset inequities in the treatment of females in literature (Fowler, 1973, p. 1124; Wells, 1973, p. 1159). However, many departments may want to incorporate such studies in regular English classes, by including more works by and about women and by using new techniques to analyze traditional works.

AUTHORS AND BOOKS

The following suggestions about authors and the bibliography placed at the end of this handbook are by no means complete. Teachers should recognize that this field of study is growing rapidly and that many more bibliographies and treatises from both national and international sources can be expected. Some traditional women authors writing about women have produced excellent materials that are readily available. These include:

Louisa May Alcott, Little Women
Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility, Emma
Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre
Emily Bronte, Wuthering Heights
Gwendolyn Brooks, poems
Elizabeth Barrett Browning, poems
Pearl Buck, Good Earth, Imperial Woman
Willa Cather, My Antonia, O Pioneers
Emily Dickinson, poems
George Eliot, Middlemarch, Adam Bede, Mill on the Floss
Edna Ferber, So Big, Showboat, Giant
Ellen Glasgow, Barren Ground
Lorraine Hansberry, Raisin in the Sun
Helen Hunt Jackson, Ramona
Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird
Amy Lowell, poems
Katherine Mansfield, short stories
Edna St. Vincent Millay, poems
Marianne Moore, poems

Katherine Ann Porter, short stories
Christina Rosetti, poems
Sara Teasdale, poems
Eudora Welty, short stories
Jessamyn West, Cress Delahanty
Edith Wharton, House of Mirth, Age of Innocence
Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse

Among contemporary authors, teachers might consider selections from such writers as the following:

Maya Angelou
Joan Didion
Mari Evans
Nikki Giovanni
Ursula LeGuin
Phyllis McGinley
Iris Murdock
Anais Nin
Joyce Carol Oates
Sylvia Plath
Ann Sexton
Muriel Spark
May Swenson

Other traditional writers who are men writing about women offer further choices:

James Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain
Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie
E.M. Forster, Howard's End, Room with a View
Ernest Gaines, The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman
Oliver Goldsmith, She Stoops to Conquer
Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, The Return of the Native, Far From the Madding Crowd
Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter
Henrik Ibsen, Hedda Gabler, Ghosts, A Doll's House
Henry James, The Portrait of a Lady, Daisy Miller, Washington Square
D. H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers
Sinclair Lewis, Main Street
Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew, As You Like It, Much Ado About Nothing
George Bernard Shaw, Pygmalion, Major Barbara, Candida, Captain Brassbound's Conversion
Richard Sheridan, A School for Scandal
Sophocles, Antigone
William Thackeray, Vanity Fair

MASS MEDIA

It seems appropriate to consider the mass media separately from language and literature because the media have such a cogent and immediate part in influencing behavior, establishing current standards and attitudes, and reflecting almost moment by moment what is happening. Because of this tremendous power of seeming relevancy and fact, the media must accept responsibility for perpetuating sexism and sex-role stereotyping; however, there have been some improvements, and further positive changes are anticipated.

FILMS

The films which are presented on television and advertised as the "greats" of the forties and fifties have a mixed effect on viewers. For some adult viewers, these pictures may bring a sense of nostalgia for the romantic ideas promoted in the wake of World War II. Some of the most rigid stereotypes of male-female behavior are perpetuated through these films such as in: "The Superhero," "The Henpecked Husband," "The Submissive Wife," and "The Temptress." They may also indoctrinate young people who had no experience in that era to seek some of the false ideals of life that the films seem to promise. On the other hand, audiences have become more sophisticated. Life has changed so much in the past twenty years that many viewers, young and old, are able to perceive these films as fairy tales, even caricatures of what life was or should be like. The films can serve to expose the difference between the reality of the present and the world of film and provide a source of humor, an insight into the "American dream," and a basis for measuring the growth of society toward mature values. There are, of course, many values to be gained from such films despite sex-stereotyping.

Since many films that represent the forties and fifties are for classroom use, teachers can use them for discussion of stereotyping, sex-role expectations, and sexism as previously defined

and illustrated. Teachers will want to apply the same list of critical questions for literature to the analysis of films, which are a form of literature; to compare modern films with those from other decades; and to predict the criteria for judging films in the next two decades.

Some current films have improved immeasurably in that they portray women as protagonists and depict the identity crisis which women face. Such films deal honestly and incisively with problems experienced by women in modern society. However, the box office appeal of sensationalism and stereotyping continues to encourage the production of films which are narrow in focus, distorted in viewpoint, and detrimental in human values. Teachers have a responsibility to help students to establish criteria so that the powerful effects of this medium may be tempered by logic, common sense, and a strong value system. Films must be analyzed for the human values which improve the quality of life and present worthy models for both males and females, young and old.

TELEVISION AND RADIO

Aside from commercials, television offers in both news programs and situation comedies daily doses of discrimination, sexism, and sex-role stereotyping, both male and female. The giddy girl, the clinging wife, the patriarch, the henpecked husband, the shrew—all these and many more are served up daily to increasingly large viewing audiences, especially the young. In time alone, aside from the powerful psychological influences, these programs can have far greater impact on adolescents than can all the textbooks and outside reading materials absorbed by students in public schools. The very least that teachers can do is help students to view such programs critically and to ask what stereotypes and values are being promulgated.

One project for students might be to view three situation comedies, analyze the roles of women and men (and boys and girls) presented, and

report their findings to the class (preferably dramatized, such as a monologue of a feminist or a psychologist or anthropologist or a brief skit which parodies some of the more ludicrous or outrageous behaviors). Such "drama" in the classroom also provides data and impetus for subsequent writing assignments to be undertaken by the whole class. Students might also note programs which have eliminated blatant stereotyping.

Teachers may also encourage students to write and send letters to producers and writers of shows, pointing out the stereotyping that they have found and suggesting why it is offensive to them. The results of professional opinion polls may not be the best way to determine the preferences of the American viewing public.

Some commercials show such blatant bad taste as well as sexism that they should be considered separately. Here again, after critical viewing, discussing, and experimenting with making their own commercials, students may wish to write stations, networks, and sponsors of products to protest the sexist and offensive portrayals of persons perpetuated by commercials. Frequently, women are treated as housewives who are silly, stupid, inept, and emotionally unbalanced. Men, too, are often satirized and demeaned even though they may be the "saviors" who rescue the inept women from falling ladders, plugged drains, and failing engines. Both sexes are shown as insomniacs, hypochondriacs, and petulant gourmets, among other types. On the other hand, some commercials are portraying more realistic and positive roles for both sexes.

Students enjoy devising their own simulated products, parodying commercials, presenting these to the class, and discussing the techniques used to appeal to the buyer. They are quick to recognize the unfortunate stereotyping and the appeal to sex, particularly the use of the female as a sex object, in attempts to sell products. Surveys of the Sacramento area by the American Association of University Women and the

Los Angeles area by a Rand Corporation team reveal that frequently broadcasts portray poor images of women and treat them in a demeaning manner, a sad commentary in view of these 1974 statistics:

1. Forty per cent of the population of women work outside the home.

2. Women comprise 38 per cent of the work force.

3. Women comprise 53 per cent of the adult population and 63 per cent of the broadcasting audience.

4. More than 12,000,000 children are supported by women. Yet more than 81 per cent of the characters shown on children's programs are male.

Radio programs emphasize oral language and its attributes of pitch, stress, intonation, and juncture. In addition to recognizing all of the features of sexism that radio broadcasts may inculcate, students may listen to identify specific differences in male-female language relating to vocabulary, voice qualities, and phrasing. Are women mentioned in the news only as victims of rape, robbery, accident, kidnapping, or other disasters? Do they seem to be opinionless persons? Do commercials appeal to the same sexist ideas by means of the same devices and stereotypes? Is there a predominance of male voices and male interests? Do programs presented during certain hours contain more sexist materials than do others? Students may wish to write, tape, and replay a radio script, using male and female voices and then reversing the speakers to note what stereotyping effects have been created. They may also wish to produce some examples of sex-biased and non-biased commercials.

NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Some of the greatest strides in equalizing treatment of the sexes and in giving a more

positive image of women have been made by newspapers and magazines within the past five years. Changes in language, subjects for articles, amount of coverage, and placement of stories have all led to improvements. (Women have reached the front pages; so-called women's pages have incorporated news of interest to both sexes.) But there are still needs for improvement. Many publications have as yet made little attempt to deal with sexism.

In units relating to magazines and newspapers, students will enjoy comparing two publications which have differing approaches to the treatment of males and females in editorial policy and news coverage. Class members may compare magazines and note the differences in sex-role expectations, points of view, language, and concepts. They may also analyze the advertising appeals utilized in each magazine. Are the ads consistent with what appear to be editorial policies?

Here is a checklist to which students may refer in studying magazines and newspapers:

1. Are women portrayed in traditional roles or untraditional roles? If the latter, what are the roles and what is the attitude expressed in editorial content?

2. Where are articles about women located in publications of general interest? Are they scattered throughout the publication or relegated to special women's sections?

3. What is the ratio of articles on males to females?

4. How are women identified, named, and described? Are these same rules applied to men? Are women called by their first names?

5. Are women placed in a subservient role implicitly or explicity?

6. Do headlines differ in articles about males or females?

7. Are masculine generic terms used in general articles and editorials, or do authors use inclusive references to all persons?

8. What is the over-all focus of the publication? Is it directed toward development of human potential or preservation of sex-role stereotypes in society (number and kinds of articles, editorials, illustrations, cartoons, advertisements)?

Other activities and projects can also increase awareness and understanding. Students may:

1. Read one pro-feminist article and one anti-feminist article and summarize the points made by each side.

2. Review 20 classified ads for jobs, noting qualifications by sex. Interview several employers who specify the sex of applicants and report the employers' reasons for doing so.

3. Write an article on a point of etiquette (one suitable for a newspaper or magazine). Note changes and areas that need to be changed. Attempt to write a "modern" book of etiquette for adolescents.

4. Note the number of female reporters with bylines whose articles appear in a particular newspaper.

5. Survey articles on treatment of women in the news. Who are they? Why are they singled out? What picture do they give of current interests, values, and attitudes?

6. Trace the change in the legal status of women, and delineate what passage of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment would mean for both men and women and for society; or

write a polemic for or against passage of the amendment.

7. Examine problems and solutions presented in advice columns, noting sexist bias. Rewrite any that appear to be biased.

8. Study cartoons and comics for sexist content, rewrite them or write parodies of the item.

ADVERTISING

Advertising is a particularly important topic for study by students in communication classes because of its prevalence and great influence on human behavior. In helping students to perceive the manipulation that is performed through words, images, and appeals, teachers may also cite the sex-role stereotyping involved. Products are touted to make women more "alluring and feminine," and to make them "cleaner and better housewives," as well as to make men better able to "capture women." Students also should be aware of the content of advertising on billboards and posters, in circulars and pamphlets, in magazines and newspapers, on radio and television, and in movie theaters.

For their analyses, students may use the following checklist, adapted from a recent report prepared by a special committee of the National Advertising Review Board:

1. Are stereotyped roles for children encouraged? Do advertisers "sell" dolls for girls and chemistry sets for boys?

2. Are women portrayed as silly, weak, neurotic, nagging, or unpleasant? Are men portrayed as tired, indecisive, inept, disagreeable, or lustful?

3. Is language stereotyped or contemptuous in tone ("Gal Friday," "Ball and chain")?

4. Are women shown in a variety of roles, not merely in servant roles (serving coffee or

scrubbing floors)? Is the home role dominant to the exclusion of other career roles?

5. Are women implied to be the property of men or treated merely as sex objects?

6. Would the women and men shown be suitable models for young persons?

7. Do men and women share the responsibilities of the home?

8. Do advertisements show a balance of both sexes and a diversity of interests for both?

9. Is there a balance of age as well as sex?

10. Do products offer unreal rewards or suggest supernatural powers?

If students find advertising false or offensive, they might write a letter to the sponsor, conduct a survey and report the results, or prepare a petition.

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See also issues of

English Journal, National Council of Teachers of English

Language Arts (formerly Elementary English), National Council of Teachers of English

California English Journal, California Association of Teachers of English